



March 8, 2023

To: Environment Committee

From: Scott Smith, Communications Director, Friends of Animals

Regarding: Raised Bill No. 1148 “AN ACT AUTHORIZING CERTAIN KILLING AND HUNTING OF BLACK BEAR AND PROHIBITING BIRD FEEDERS AND OTHER UNINTENTIONAL AND INTENTIONAL FEEDING OF POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS ANIMALS”

You’ll hear a lot of expert testimony as to why allowing a recreational hunt to kill Connecticut’s bears is not an appropriate response to their long-overdue return to our forests and wild places.

I hope to remind you that there are proven strategies that *do* work to keep bears wild and people safe. Connecticut is late to the game in terms of helping residents co-exist peacefully with bears—other states have developed ways to reduce unwanted interactions with such valued wildlife. We should learn from those best practices.

For example: Following six long-term studies, Colorado authorities worked with officials in Durango to put bear-proof trash cans at homes in certain neighborhoods to reduce bear-human conflicts. In areas without bear-proof cans, conflicts increased sharply. In Boulder, residents can access a downloadable map of where bear-resistant containers are mandatory in their community. The city’s bear safe ordinance requires all trash and curbside compost to be secured from bears until collected by a waste hauler.

Rather than focus on giving hunters permission to blunder through our woods to kill 50 bears for blood sport, why not help communities located in bear habitat institute and enforce bear-resistant trash programs and food-waste diversion efforts?

These bins cost about \$200 — even less when purchased in bulk. Bearicuda’s Kodiak container is fully automated and requires only a single driver to pick up. That company is based in Litchfield. Shouldn’t they be part of the solution?

Why not require DEEP to equip campgrounds with the same measures, and to pay more than lip service to promoting bear-smart education programs? Teach people in bear country

about the need to take down bird feeders in season, eliminate other food attractants, and what to do when they see a bear. Sponsor a lottery for a mass killing? In Connecticut? Please. And rather than give state agents further license to kill bears for farmers, why not task them to enforce compliance with proven, non-lethal strategies, like protecting apiaries, barns and chicken coops with electric fencing? Revise Senate Bill No. 1148 with the common-sense solutions proposed by the Coalition to Protect Connecticut's Bears.

Do not follow New Jersey's unscientific approach to "population reduction," which randomly kills bears, the overwhelming majority of whom have never approached a human or a home. Their lawmakers' rush to allow a hunt under emergency rules last fall to appease the small fraction of residents who like to kill was a disaster, and only resulted in widespread revulsion among the vast majority of voters who do not hunt and who do value wildlife. Less than 1 percent of Connecticut residents are hunters. Who are you listening to?

With all due respect,

Scott Smith
Communications Director
Friends of Animals
777 Post Road, Suite 205
Darien, CT 06820